

KOSOVO

PROGRAM PROFILE



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History of Partnership

The House Democracy Partnership (HDP) approved a legislative strengthening program with the Assembly of Kosovo in 2009.¹ Since then, it has worked with the Assembly in the areas of constituent relations, committee operations and parliamentary research.

HDP has encouraged development on these fronts with three congressional delegations and 22 training seminars, seven for visiting Kosovar members of parliament (MPs) and fifteen for visiting staff from the National Assembly, among other forms of engagement including staff delegations and technical assistance consultancies.

Background

A new constitution came into effect in June 2008, establishing Kosovo as a parliamentary republic with three independent branches. The legislature is comprised of the 120-member National Assembly, whose members are elected for four-year terms.

Parliamentary elections to the Assembly of Kosovo have been held five times since 1999, with the latest in 2014. More than 20 political parties competed in the Assembly elections, which were widely deemed to meet international standards of legitimacy and credibility. Kosovo has a vibrant multi-party system, with numerous parties and the system of proportional representation and guaranteed minority representation means that no one party is likely to have a parliamentary majority.

Congressional Delegations

The most recent Congressional delegation by HDP to Kosovo took place from August 11 and 21, 2015, as part of a mission to Timor Leste, Nepal, Indonesia and Kosovo. The delegation was led by senior HDP member, Vern Buchanan (R-FL) and Ranking Democratic Member David Price (D-NC), along with Reps. Jim McDermott (D-WA), Adrian Smith (R-NE), Susan Davis (D-CA), and Dina Titus (D-NV). This was HDP's second Congressional delegations in the 114th Congress, and 32nd overall since 2005.

Chairman David Dreier (R-CA) led a delegation to Kosovo in April 2012 to meet with their counterparts in the Kosovo Assembly. After meeting with President Atifete Jahjaga to discuss U.S.-Kosovo relations and tensions between Kosovo and Serbia, the delegation met with the Speaker of the Kosovo Assembly, Jakup Krasniqi. During their time in the Assembly, the delegation met with Serb and other ethnic minority members of the parliament to discuss minority rights; with the Budget and Finance Committee to discuss budget oversight and fiscal analysis; and with the Public Accounts Committee to discuss

¹ At the time the partnership was initiated, the House Democracy Partnership was known as the House Democracy Assistance Commission (HDAC). The name was subsequently changed to reflect the nature of HDP as a partnership with partner countries.

oversight of government spending. The Kosovo Assembly women's caucus met with the delegation to share their experiences, which was followed by sessions on committee hearings and constituent services for committee chairs, deputy chairs and caucus leaders. HDP staff held concurrent discussions with Kosovar committee staff on public hearing preparations and the role of staff in oversight activities.

HDP organized a congressional delegation to Kosovo in February 2010, led by Representative Earl Pomeroy (D-ND). The delegation's trip marked the formal inauguration of HDP's partnership with the Assembly of Kosovo. The delegation's program began in the Assembly, where they met with the speaker and the presidency of the Assembly (a nine-member leadership team representing the major parties). The centerpiece of the two-day program was an afternoon of intensive training sessions on the committee hearing process and constituent services. The delegation also met with the prime minister and members of the Foreign Affairs Committee, which allowed for discussions on bilateral foreign policy issues. Towards the end of the visit, the delegation visited one of the largest Serb enclaves in the country to underscore the importance of minority rights and participation in democratic development.

Staff Delegations and Technical Assistance Consultancies

In June 2016, Omar Ashmawy, Director and Chief Counsel for the Office of Congressional Ethics, participated in a technical consultancy to provide advice on parliamentary ethics regimes to the Kosovar parliament. Mr. Ashmawy met with parliamentary leadership, including Speaker of the Parliament Kadri Veseli as well as the Presidency of the Assembly, to discuss the parliament's efforts to implement and enforce rules of procedure, a code of conduct for MPs and the prevention of conflicts of interest. Mr. Ashmawy also had the opportunity to meet with leaders of all major party caucuses (government and opposition) and ethnic minority parties, members of the Forum for Parliamentary Transparency, members of the Committee on Legislation and Rules of Procedure and representatives of prominent "watchdog" civil society organizations and think tanks. The visit culminated in a high-level conference on parliamentary ethics in partnership with the U.S. Embassy and USAID mission in Pristina.

Sherry Shapiro, a retired researcher from the Congressional Research Service, met with staff of the Kosovo National Assembly in September 2015 to build on the legislative research and analysis lessons learned during the legislative staff institute in October 2014. The training consisted of an advanced course on techniques of public policy analysis and craft skills needed to work effectively with the parliament. Additionally, it included a seminar on establishing a budget office, specifically related to rules and procedures of a budget office and the responsibilities of staff to analyze the budget. The HDP consultants met with the secretary general of the parliament and the director of research to gauge the extent to which MPs were making use of the research unit, how satisfied they were with the services they received from the unit, and ways to further partner with HDP to continue professionalizing the research unit staff.

In May 2015, a delegation of congressional staff of HDP members visited Kosovo and Macedonia as part of an assessment exercise to capture the impact of HDP's work to date and make recommendations as to future programming. Led by former Rep. Earl Pomeroy (D-ND), the assessment team also included Omri Rahmil, Legislative Assistant to HDP Chair Rep. Peter Roskam (R-IL) and Laura Thrift, Senior Policy Advisor to HDP Ranking Member Rep. David Price (D-NC), as well a senior NDI staff. During their visit, the delegation met with senior parliamentary leadership, as well as HDP program alumni, representatives of the diplomatic and donor communities, civil society activists and other stakeholders with perspective on the legislature's development and the role of HDP in strengthening the parliamentary institution.

MP Seminars

Building on a technical consultancy in February 2016, Kosovar members of parliament joined their peers from Colombia, Georgia, Kenya, Kyrgyzstan, Liberia, Macedonia, Pakistan and Peru in April 2016 for an inbound exchange on “The Role of Parliament in Strengthening Public Integrity Systems.” The program aimed to help participants create strategies for operationalizing standards for ethical conduct in the legislature and enhance government performance and legitimacy more broadly. The delegation participated in intensive practical sessions with members of congress and congressional staff regarding strategic communications around ethical breaches, responses to negative press coverage, party and caucus dynamics around conduct and discipline, and effective utilization of oversight mechanisms. During the exchange, the Kosovo MPs had the opportunity to present a case study to the delegation on managing parliamentary crisis to protect institutional integrity and public trust.

Parliaments worldwide face common challenges arising from a perceived crisis of trust by citizens. Public opinion polling in many regions reveals a continued decline of public confidence in legislative performance. To help address these issues, HDP convened a special MP exchange on this topic in September/October 2015, featuring participation by members of parliament from the legislatures of Georgia, Kosovo, Macedonia, Nepal and Ukraine. The program provided opportunities for sharing international perspective, strategies and practical tools for managing citizen expectations, demonstrating effective legislative performance and rebuilding public confidence. To this end, the program included meetings with members of the U.S. Congress; representatives of civil society, including from “watchdog” organizations; and staff of independent third-party audit agencies. The agenda also includes in-depth exploration of these topics through case studies that illustrate specific legislative responses to declining citizen trust in the legislature.

In February 2015, the National Democratic Institute facilitated a parliamentary exchange program that represented a departure from the previous technical subjects of focus, tackling “leadership in the digital economy.” The program was jointly supported by HDP and the Institute for Representative Government (IRG), a bipartisan organization of former members of congress dedicated to strengthening the legislative institution. The program included 22 members of parliament in total, representing the legislatures of Colombia, Georgia, Ghana, Indonesia, Jordan, Kenya, Kosovo, Nepal, Peru, Serbia and Tunisia. The program explored how, from the use of social media and mobile platforms by members of parliament, new technologies are changing how politics functions and parliamentary business is conducted in many countries. The program also probed how the burgeoning use of technology raises a number of policy issues for parliaments around the world, including how best to support economic development and trade, protect citizens’ privacy interests and defend against cybercrime. As an emerging field of policy expertise, issues relating to technology also present opportunities for women and young politicians to assert leadership, bringing new skills that may not otherwise exist within traditional party and parliamentary structures. During the exchange program, delegates explored these topics through dialogue with fellow members of parliament, parliamentary staff, policy experts and industry leaders in both Washington, D.C. and Silicon Valley, CA. The Silicon Valley portion of the trip was especially appreciated by delegates, who have been experimenting with several new applications, platforms and technological initiatives to narrow the gap between parliament and citizens.

Kosovar MPs were invited to Washington in June 2014 for a week-long seminar that focused on strengthening committee operations. The seminar hosted 20 MPs from five partnership countries. Delegates examined the U.S. Congress committee structure and functions including committee relations with the executive branch agencies they oversee; the role of committee chairs; the role and significance

of public hearings; professional research, drafting and amending services to committees; and several other related issues. Additionally, MPs observed a public committee hearing and met with current and former members and staff of the U.S. Congress.

In July 2012, four Kosovar MPs came to Washington to participate in a week-long seminar on committee operations and were joined by colleagues from Macedonia and Liberia. The program covered various aspects of committee operations including the role of leadership, legislative ethics, oversight and committee hearings. Members of congress and staff also discussed the importance of non-partisan institutions such as the Congressional Research Service, the Government Accountability Office and the Congressional Budget Office. More than a dozen current and former representatives were able to participate and share their experiences with the visiting MPs.

In June 2012, HDP invited three female MPs to participate in its inaugural women's seminar. The week-long program brought together women MPs from four partner countries (Kosovo, Indonesia, Peru and Macedonia) to discuss economic and political issues relevant to women. The seminar began with presentations from think tanks and NGOs on topics including advocacy, economic empowerment and using research to further policy. Later in the week, the MPs met with female members of congress, including the co-chairs of the Congressional Women's Caucus and a member of the House Leadership Team, to exchange ideas about particular challenges faced by elected female representatives and strategies for furthering women's advancement into leadership positions.

Kosovar MPs were invited to Washington from September 26 to October 3, 2009, for a week-long seminar focused on committee operations. The program began with an overview by the Congressional Research Service on congressional committee structure. Committee staff and former members of congress spoke to participants about various aspects of committee operations, including the role of staff and organizing public hearings. Roughly a dozen members of congress spoke to participants in the seminar, offering their personal experience in using committees to advance their own legislative and oversight priorities.

Staff Seminars

From August 7 to 13, 2016, parliamentary staff from Kosovo participated in a collaborative HDP program in partnership with the parliamentary section of the International Federation of Library Associations (IFLA-Parl). This parliamentary staff institute focused on the importance of strengthening legislative effectiveness through library and research services. During the first half of the week, under the auspices of the HDP program, the delegation attended sessions focused on the importance of objective and nonpartisan research support to legislative integrity; challenges of and strategies for cultivating trust by members and partisan staff; concerns related to openness, transparency, and access to information; and ethical considerations in parliamentary service. Following the HDP portion of the agenda, the delegation joined hundreds of their colleagues at the IFLA pre-conference to the World Library and Information Congress to learn about the structure of the Congressional Research Service, supporting members of congress access to legislative information and streamlining library and research processes.

In March 2016, HDP conducted an inbound exchange focused on macroeconomic forecasting and budget analysis in Washington, D.C. Parliamentary staff from Kosovo joined their peers from Colombia, Indonesia, Kenya, Liberia, Peru and Timor-Leste. The delegation met with HDP Chair Rep. Peter Roskam (R-II) and Ranking Member Rep. David Price (D-NC), expert staff of Congressional committees, and representatives from government support agencies, including the Congressional Research Service and

Congressional Budget Office and the Office of Management and Budget to discuss the technical aspects of macroeconomic forecasting and the use of budget cost-estimates to inform new methods and procedures for budget analysis in partner countries' budget processes. Throughout the week, the delegates also heard from their peers during country presentations, which allowed for increased dialogue and exchange of information between delegations, a primary goal of HDP, and an informal mentorship between those countries with established budget offices and those looking for support during the process of establishing a new budget office.

In December 2015, three parliamentary staff members from the Assembly of Kosovo joined colleagues from four other countries for the first HDP staff institute tailored for partisan staff. The weeklong exchange focused on providing effective support to parliamentary groups and caucuses with sessions on utilizing support structures for caucus operations, the role of the caucus in communicating and advancing party platforms, promoting cohesion and discipline in caucus operations and drawing on data and technology to enhance caucus operations.

NDI facilitated an HDP parliamentary staff institute on "Strengthening the Legislative Institution in the Wake of Political Transitions" from April 27 to May 1, 2015, in Washington, D.C. In total, 17 parliamentary staff from Kosovo, Macedonia, Nepal and Ukraine participated in the exchange. In addition to discussion of the normative principles of democratic legislative processes, the delegation engaged on a practical level with specific tools and resources they could use to support legislatures back in their home countries.

In January 2015, two parliamentary staff members joined colleagues from 14 other countries for one of the largest HDP staff institutes to date. Facilitated by the National Democratic Institute, the weeklong program focused on strengthening committee operations. The program sought to provide participants an overview of committee operations in the U.S. Congress, and covered topics such as internal and external policy analysis resources, the oversight role and oversight tools available to committees, as well as legislative and executive branch relations. Emphasis was placed on organizing, preparing and conducting public hearings. The program also provided the delegates the opportunity to discuss the role and functions of committees in their home legislatures.

Staff of the Assembly of Kosovo participated in a legislative staff institute organized by HDP in October 2014. The staff institute hosted 24 participants from 12 partnership countries for a week-long seminar that focused on legislative research, analysis and drafting. The program began with an overview of how the U.S. Congress works, led by the office of the Clerk of the House and the Congressional Research Service. The seminar focused largely on the policy analysis process, which was designed to enhance analytical skills, strengthen the connection between information providers and the legislative process and to ensure that legislatures were presented with a variety of choices to solve societal problems. The seminar provided best practices to (1) define the problem to be addressed, (2) identify alternative solutions for the resolution of the problem, and (3) trace the key impacts and effects of the alternatives, to utilize when providing products and services to the legislature.

HDP welcomed two staff members of the Assembly of Kosovo at the parliamentary staff institute in December 2012. This exchange centered on how to bolster committee operations in parliament and included information on setting committee agendas; operationalizing committee processes; cooperating with subcommittees and committees that have overlapping jurisdiction; organizing and preparing public hearings; and maintaining committee records for archival. The delegation was also able to hear about

the more substantive aspect of committee operations in the U.S. Congress, such as amending legislation and writing policy for legislators.

In October 2012, one staff member from the Kosovo Assembly participated in a staff institute to strengthen legislative budget analysis. Twenty-three staff from twelve partner countries participated in the program, which included meetings with officials from the Congressional Budget Office, the Congressional Research Service, and staff from the House Budget, Appropriations, Agriculture and Ways and Means Committees. Participants also met with representatives from the Government Accountability Office, the World Bank Institute and the International Budget Partnership.

In January 2012, two staff members participated in a training seminar on legislative research and analysis. They were joined by colleagues from 12 other HDP partner countries. The parliamentary staff institute included presentations and discussions with members of congress and top officials from the Congressional Research Service (CRS). Current and former CRS staff provided the participants an overview of basic legislative research and analysis techniques including identifying sources of information, basic policy analysis, developing alternatives for the legislature and conducting impact analysis.

Staff from Kosovo attended a staff institute on strengthening budget analysis capacity in the legislature from October 18 to 22, 2010. The institute included 21 staff from 11 partner countries and meetings with or presentations by officials from the Congressional Budget Office, the Congressional Research Service, and staff from the House Committees on Budget and Appropriations and the Joint Committee on Taxation. In addition, budget analysts from the Kenya National Assembly shared their experience in establishing and developing a parliamentary budget office.

HDP organized a staff institute on committee operations from December 13 to 17, 2010 with 27 staff from 13 partner countries, including Kosovo. The institute included meetings with or presentations by officials from the Congressional Research Service and staff from several House committees, as well as meetings with Rep. David Price and Rep. David Dreier. In addition, committee staff from the Assembly of the Republic of Macedonia shared their experience in developing procedures to begin using oversight hearings as part of the work of their parliamentary committees.

In June 2010, staff from the Kosovo Assembly traveled to Warsaw, Poland to attend the 20th anniversary of the Frost-Solomon Commission. They were joined by 22 MPs from 11 partner countries, along with MPs and research staff from former partners of the Frost-Solomon Commission. Current and former staff from the Congressional Research Service worked with them to help develop their own parliamentary research service through workshops, coaching and open forums.

Staff from the Kosovo Assembly participated in a training program in Mavrovo, Macedonia from November 10 to 14, 2009. They joined 24 participants from three countries for an intensive program on committee operations. Organized in collaboration with the National Democratic Institute, the program examined how staff can more effectively support committee operations by organizing hearings, soliciting public input on legislation, conducting policy and legal research and writing committee reports.

A delegation of staff from Kosovo attended a staff institute from December 7 to 17, 2009, that was organized in conjunction with CRS and the International Republican Institute. The staff institute hosted 27 participants from 12 partner countries, who were mostly officials and analysts of their parliament's

research service. The program focused on the role of the research service in providing independent information and analysis to members of parliament and their staff.

Staff from Kosovo also attended a seminar that was held from November 2 to 6, 2009, in collaboration with the National Democratic Institute. This institute hosted 27 participants from 12 partner countries and focused on the role of information and technology in the legislature. The centerpiece of the program was participation in the third annual World E-Parliament Conference, which specifically addressed how information and communication technology can help improve representation, transparency, accountability, openness and effectiveness in parliament.

Self-Initiated Parliamentary Delegations

In June 2012, HDP welcomed the speaker of the Kosovar parliament to Washington, D.C. As part of a four-day program, HDP facilitated a meeting between the Kosovar speaker, the chairman and ranking member of HDP, and the U.S. speaker of the house.